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History and Benefit of the Tribal Veteran Representative (TVR) Program

Alaska Perspective

April 9th, 2013



National Veteran Statistics*

- Currently 154,000 American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) Veterans
- Native Americans have the highest rates of military service per capita compared to other groups, yet they are the least likely to seek out VA services
- 7.1%-Unemployment rate of AI/AN Veterans/4.9% unemployment rate for all Veterans
- 15.3% of AI/AN Veterans who do not have health insurance/6.3% of Veterans of all other races who do not have Health Insurance
- 36.4% of AI/AN Veterans who suffer from one or more disability/26.2% of Veterans of all other races who suffer from one or more disability
- 18.95 of AI/AN Veterans who have a service –connected disability rating/15.6% of Veterans of all other races who have a service-connected disability rating

- *Department of Veterans profile of AI/AN Veterans released September 2012

Alaska VA Demographics

- **FY12 Alaska Veteran Population** **77,342**
(Source www.va.gov/vetdata)
- **Overall Enrollees** **29,233**
- **Total Unique Patients** **16,595**
- **38.8% AK Veteran Population enrolled –
Market Penetration**

Alaska Has More Veterans

Alaska has a noticeably higher percentage of veterans (14.1%) than the nation as a whole (9.3%)

- Approximately one out of every four Alaska men age 18 or older is a veteran – 24 percent-in contrast to 18 percent nationwide. Alaska women were also more likely to be veterans in 2010 – 4 percent in Alaska as opposed to 1 percent for U.S.**

(Alaska Economic Trends – May 2012, Page 15)

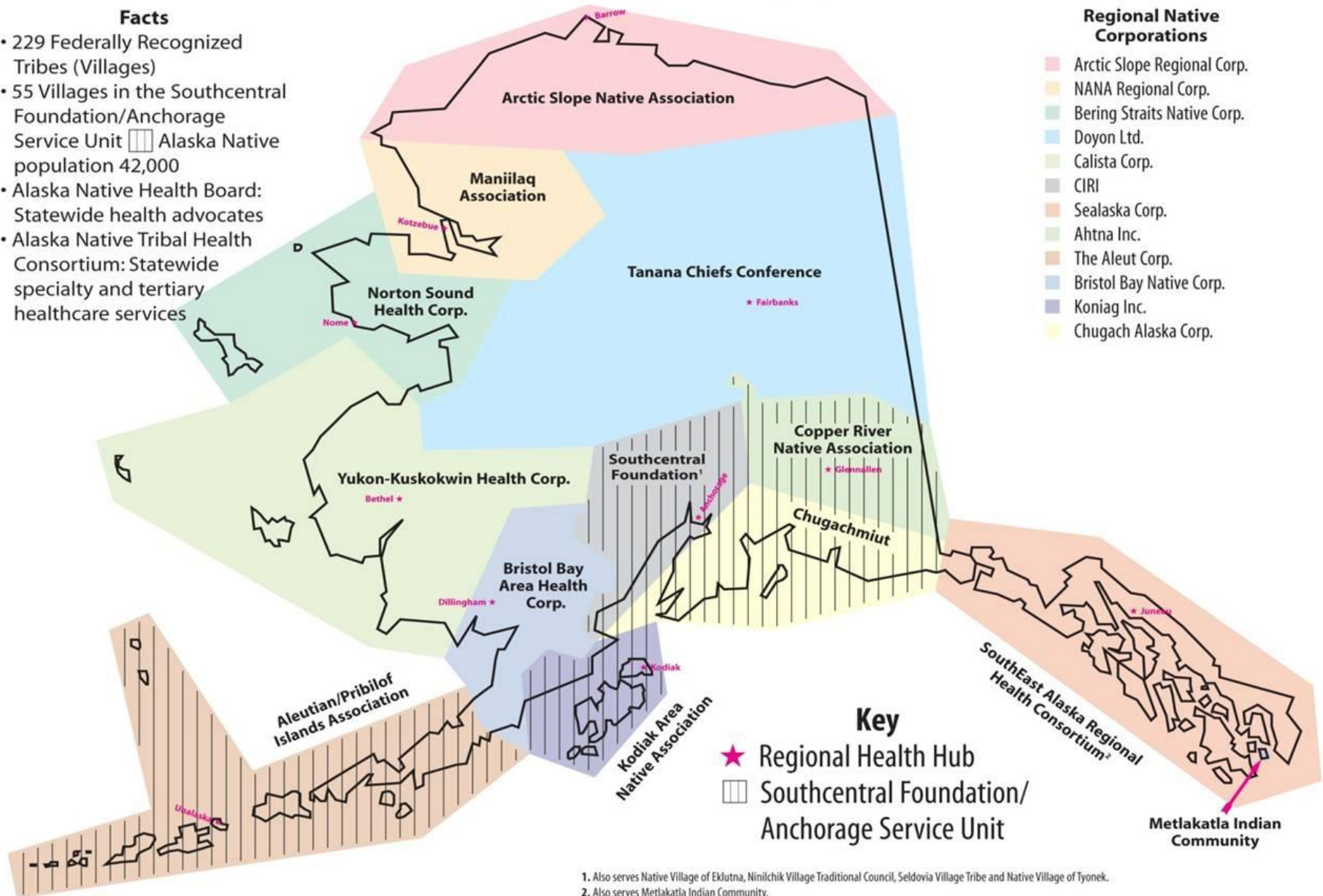
Alaska Native Health System

Facts

- 229 Federally Recognized Tribes (Villages)
- 55 Villages in the Southcentral Foundation/Anchorage Service Unit
- Alaska Native population 42,000
- Alaska Native Health Board: Statewide health advocates
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium: Statewide specialty and tertiary healthcare services

Regional Native Corporations

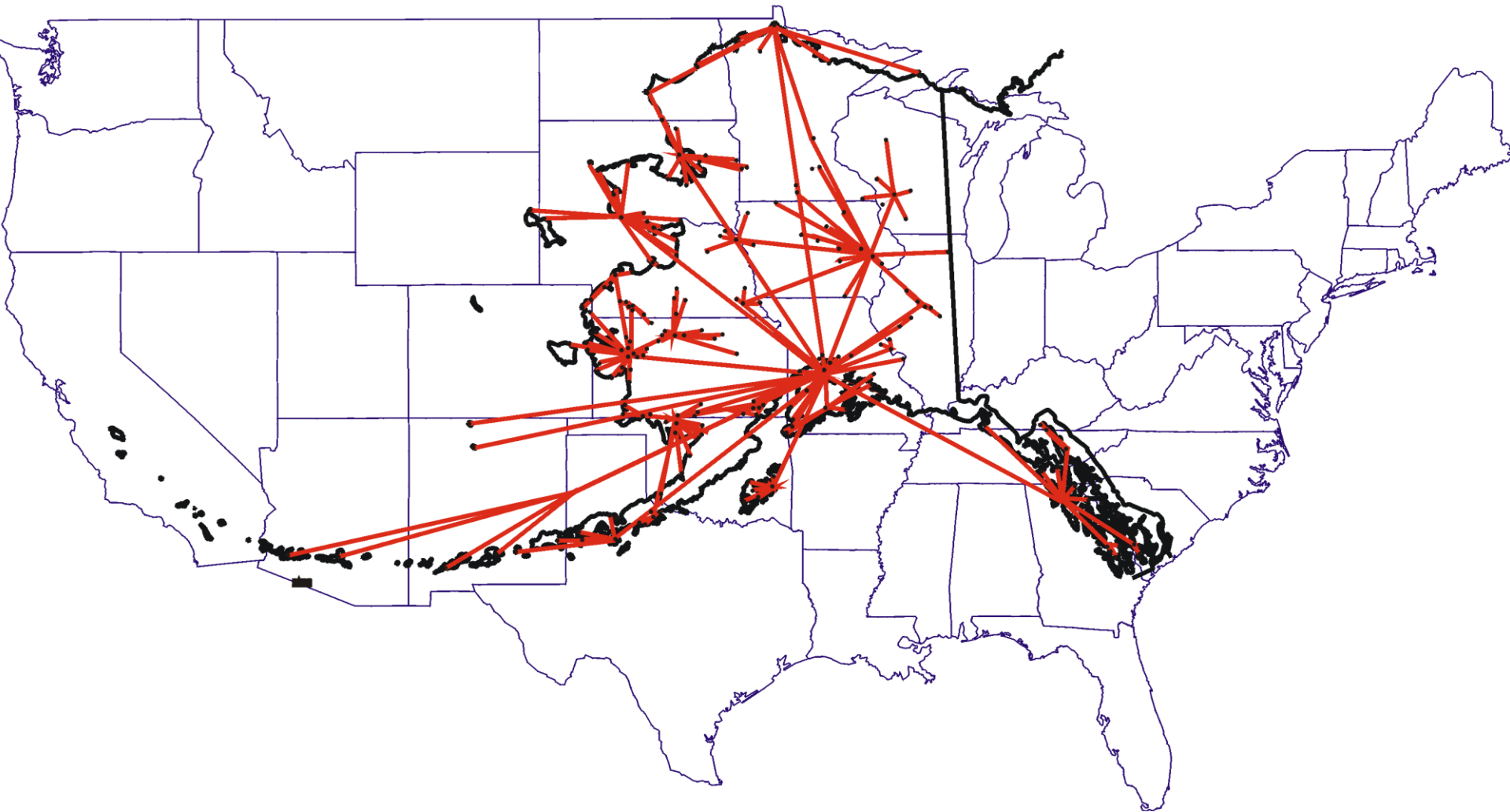
- Arctic Slope Regional Corp.
- NANA Regional Corp.
- Bering Straits Native Corp.
- Doyon Ltd.
- Calista Corp.
- CIRI
- Sealaska Corp.
- Ahtna Inc.
- The Aleut Corp.
- Bristol Bay Native Corp.
- Koniag Inc.
- Chugach Alaska Corp.



1. Also serves Native Village of Eklutna, Ninilchik Village Traditional Council, Seldovia Village Tribe and Native Village of Tyonek.
2. Also serves Metlakatla Indian Community.

THE ALASKA NATIVE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM REFERRAL PATTERN

Same Scale Comparison - Alaska Area to Lower 48 States



Alaska History of TVR Program

- Western Region began TVR program well over 20 years ago
 - Washington , Oregon, and Idaho all have robust TVR Tribal Programs
- VA Network 19, Denver conducted first TVR training in 2001
- First training in Anchorage April 2008 Anchorage- 5 TVRs trained
- February 2009 –December 2012 – 7 additional training sessions
 - Currently 109 trained (many attend multiple trainings)
- Planned for FY-13- Goal total 200 total TVRs trained
 - May 2013-Fairbanks
 - September 2013- Anchorage

Ongoing into the Future

Tasks of Tribal Veterans Representatives in Alaska

- The Tribal Veterans Representative (TVR) Program provides outreach, education, peer assistance and information on Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits and services.
- TVRs are a liaison between Veteran, VA, Veterans Service Organizations and Community.
- TVRs are volunteers and not employees of the VA.
- TVRs are respected local individuals and/or tribal community members who are committed to working within the tribal community to assist Veterans in accessing VA benefits and services.
- TVR provides a necessary level of trust important to outreach to Tribal Veterans. It is this trust, understanding and cultural competence that makes this program unique.



- 109 TVRs trained to date.
- Travel from locations throughout Alaska on VA Invitational Orders
- Training session for FY 2013
Sitka October 2012,
Fairbanks May 2013
Anchorage September 2013



Benefits of TVR Program

- **TVRs support Veterans in so many ways;**
- **Build strong community network for Veterans support**
- **TVRs share information and support each other**
- **Help connect Veterans with VA for needed services**
- **Participate in outreach events in their community and others**
- **Assist Veterans in completing 1010EZ Healthcare enrollment forms-increase # eligible Veterans**
- **Assist Veterans in Disability Claims process-connect Veterans with Service Officers-increase # Veterans receiving compensation-economic stability of community**
- **Assist Veterans with burial benefits, flags, services, and headstones etc.**

How to Get Started with TVR Program

- **Identify interested VA or Native Leaders for potential partners**
- **Meet to develop relationship and commitment to support TVR program**
- **Schedule TVR training**
- **Develop plan for logistics , locate facility, audiovisual, refreshments etc.**
- **Develop Agenda, Line up speakers**
- **Order vests, TVR bags, make ID badges**
- **Prepare written materials and PowerPoint presentations**
- **Identify and invite participants**
- **Conduct training (Alaska is 3 days)**
- **Evaluate strengths and weaknesses**
- **Provide ongoing support to TVRs-(Alaska has monthly 1-800 conference call) provide with outreach materials, forms etc.**

Lessons Learned

- **This is a Journey – It takes time- Relationships are everything**
- **Must create great partners – VHA, VBA, Memorial Affairs, Veterans' Service Officers, State Veteran's Affairs, IHS and Alaska Native Tribal Healthcare Organizations**
- **TVRs willing to be available when the Veteran is ready for access to any benefit**
- **Must have Cultural Sensitivity- Not all tribes and villages are the same**
- **Must have on-going Communication mechanism**
- **Requires Resources - Leadership Commitment, Dedicated Personnel and Funding**
- **Must have passion and commitment to serve Veterans**

Rural Veteran Outreach





QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

For more information on today's presentation, please contact:

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